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**Abstract**

Despite significant increases in spending on child care and education during the last decade, PISA scores suggest that educational performance remains static, uneven and strongly related to parents' income and background. Better educational performance could improve labour market outcomes, raise growth, lower the consequences of a disadvantaged background and increase social mobility. Given the austere fiscal outlook, improvements have to come from higher efficiency rather than further spending. More focused pre-school spending on disadvantaged children could improve skill

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formation. Better-targeted funding for disadvantaged children combined with strengthened incentives for schools to attract and support these students would help raising educational outcomes. The government is increasing user choice by expanding the academies programme and introducing Free Schools, but needs to closely follow effects on fair access for disadvantaged children. The impact of increasing user choice on educational outcomes is uncertain, but the government should experiment with proscribing the use of residence criteria in admission to local government maintained schools in some local authorities. Reforms to increase supply flexibility should be pursued. All government funded schools should enjoy the same freedom in hiring and wage setting to level the playing field across different school types. To better gauge progress and inform policy makers, schools and parents on educational outcomes, additional performance measures should be developed and steps taken to lessen the reliance on grades in performance management. Insufficient supply of high-quality vocational programmes and tertiary education study places hamper human capital formation and growth. Stabilising and simplifying vocational education by more focus on high quality apprenticeships would support participation. The government needs to find efficient measures to raise participation especially among children from low income families to replace the abolished educational maintenance allowance. Further reforms to funding of higher education could lower taxpayers' costs and help finance a needed expansion in the sector. This Working Paper relates to the 2011 OECD Economic Survey of the United Kingdom (HRK / Abstract übernommen)

**Signature**

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